gaged in business in Boston, has been elected president of the college, to succeed President Ernest Fox Nichols, who has resigned to accept a chair of physics at Yale University.

At the University of Nebraska, Dr. David D. Whitney, now at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., has been appointed professor of zoology, in charge of courses in the fields of genetics, evolution and experimental zoology. Homer B. Latimer, now professor of zoology in Nebraska Wesleyan University, has been appointed associate professor of zoology, in charge of work in vertebrate anatomy, embryology and histology.

George Frederic Ordeman, Ph.D., has been elected associate professor of chemistry, and Robert William Dickey, Ph.D., associate professor of physics in Washington and Lee University.

At Sibley College, Cornell University, the following instructors have been promoted to the grade of assistant professors: Clarence Andrew Pierce, in power engineering; Myron A. Lee, in machine design, and John George Pertsch, Jr., in electrical engineering. Joseph Franklin Putnam has been appointed assistant professor of electrical engineering. He has been professor of physics in St. John's College, Shanghai. Frederick George Switzer has been appointed instructor in the mechanics of engineering.

Vera Dantschakoff, M.D., of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, has been appointed instructor in anatomy, and Rosalie F. Morton, M.D., as attending surgeon at Vanderbilt Clinic of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University.

Recent additions to the faculty of the University of Arkansas are J. Sam Guy, Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins), head of the department of chemistry, succeeding the late Dr. C. G. Carroll; F. G. Baender, M.S. (Cornell University), formerly assistant professor in the University of Iowa, head of the department of mechanical engineering; P. B. Barker, late of the agricultural faculty of the University of Missouri, head of the department of agronomy. Arthur M. Harding, Ph.D. (Chicago), returns to the university, after a year's leave of absence, as professor of mathematics and university examiner.

## DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

### CORAL REEFS

To the Editor of Science: In his article on "Coral Reefs" in the April *Scientific Monthly*, Professor Davis gives an abridged and distorted version of Alexander Agassiz's theory, thus setting up a dummy to be conveniently knocked down. A careful consideration of *all* the forces suggested by Agassiz as contributing to the formation of atolls and barrier reefs should convince Professor Davis that the hypothesis calls for neither cliffs, deltas nor talus on the islands enclosed by barrier reefs. For the ring of living corals breaks the force of the waves; and the great quantities of water piled over the reef by the trade winds forms a gigantic modified pothole which scours out the material eroded from the island. Professor Davis has stated that any theory would account for the formation of atolls and barrier reefs themselves. He appears to forget that it was because many investigators in the field were unable to reconcile the facts observed with the theory of subsidence that led them to suggest other explanations. Any one at all familiar with the methods of work of both the elder and younger Agassiz would never think of quietly assuming that either was ignorant of the literature of his subject.

G. R. Agassiz

### ANOTHER POISONOUS CLAVICEPS

The results of the experiments by Brown and Ranck, showing the poisonous action of *Claviceps paspali* Stevens and Hall on animals, published in Technical Bulletin 6, Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, has just been received by me and read with unusual interest, as I have followed the history of this interesting fungus since 1902.

I first noticed the disease produced by *Claviceps* very abundant and conspicuous on *Paspalum lævе* in Maryland in the summer of 1902, and in the autumn of the same year a sample of it was received from a Maryland

farmer who had taken it from a field where cattle had died with symptoms of poisoning. The similarity of these sclerotia to the common ergot gave further indication of its probable poisonous character and a quantity of the diseased grains was collected for testing, but no animals were available at the time and learning from Professor P. H. Rolfs that he was working on the life history of the fungus (as recorded by Stevens and Hall when they published descriptions of the two *Paspalum* ergots in the *Botanical Gazette* in 1910) the matter was dropped. There was, however, a short note on these observations published in my report on plant diseases in Maryland in 1902, in the Maryland Horticultural Society Report for 1902, as follows: "A fungus disease causing the seeds of a wild grass (*Paspalum lævе*) to expand and break open like popcorn has been abundant and has been suspected of being poisonous to cattle."

Since then a few cases of stock disease, sometimes confused with the well-known but yet little understood "horse disease," have occurred in Maryland, where the *Paspalum* ergot was abundant enough to be suspected and, judging from the experimental results so well worked out in Mississippi, was without much doubt the cause of the trouble.

The *Claviceps* sclerotia which replace the *Paspalum* grains are frequent in Maryland nearly every year, though in some years almost absent and sometimes, as in 1915, unusually abundant.

J. B. S. NORTON
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### NAMES OF CELESTIAL ELEMENTS

I WISH to learn the name of the giver and first place of publication of the following: Neptunium of Mendeléef, cited by Biclok and Martin; Coronium (the same as Mendeléef's "x"), said to be by Huggins; Helium, Aurorium and Nebulum (or Nebulium), the last two cited by Crookes, presidential address Brit. Ass. 1898. Any one who can give me any one of the citations will confer a favor upon the subscriber.

B. K. EMERSON
AMHERST, MASS

## QUOTATIONS

### ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATIONS IN THE LAND GRANT COLLEGES

ON July 2, 1862, President Lincoln approved the act establishing the Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, and on March 3, 1863, he approved the act incorporating the National Academy of Sciences. When the nation was stricken down with civil war it sought relief in science, on the one hand, establishing institutions for the scientific education of all the people in the arts of peace, on the other hand, recognizing exceptional merit in science and making the most distinguished men of the country the advisers of the government.

Now when the world is again infected by war more terrible than can be imagined in this one great nation which has escaped, we are naturally driven to think of "preparedness," and it will be well if this movement can be directed to making the nation strong through education and scientific research. At least three bills are before the Congress which are more important for the welfare of the country and its defense from foreign aggression, should that ever become necessary, than any enlargement of the army and navy. These bills would establish a national university, extend secondary education in industry and agriculture, and establish research stations for engineering at the college of agriculture and mechanic arts.

A national university at Washington, holding the same position toward the state and privately endowed universities as these hold or should hold to the colleges and schools of each state, would correspond with the establishment of the National Academy of Sciences during the civil war, but could be made far more effective in its influence on research and on the efficient conduct of the departments of the government.

The Smith-Hughes bill provides for the promotion of the vocational education of boys and girls of high-school age through cooperation of the nation and the states. There is appropriated for the first year $1,700,000 with an increment each year for eight years on condition that each cooperating state shall appro-